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## OT 520 Foundations for Old Testament Study

Brian D. Russell

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## **Rough Draft – Final version will be sent to all registered students in late May.**

**Preparation required for this class: 1) Gain familiarity with the geography of the Ancient Near East (a specific list of key elements will be included in final draft), 2) Read pp. 9-68 in Drumbrell's *The Faith of Israel* and pp. 225-41 in *Old Testament Interpretation*.**

### **OT520 Old Testament Introduction**

Asbury Theological Seminary  
June 2003

**Instructor: Brian D. Russell**  
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**Office Phone: 407.482.7660 (I check messages daily)**  
**Office Hours: TBA**

*"Apply the whole of yourself to the text; apply the whole of the text to yourself." - Bengel*

I love teaching this course. I am excited about the opportunity to work simultaneously with students from both campuses. It is my prayer that as we enter the world of the Scriptures of Ancient Israel that we will emerge better prepared to serve as interpreters of Scripture *and* become more profound people in the process.

#### **I. GENERAL COURSE DESCRIPTION**

An introduction to (1) the literature of the Old Testament in its socio-historical, literary, and canonical contexts; and (2) critical study of the OT.

#### **II. LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

Upon successful completion of this course with a grade of C or better, the student will be able to :

- A. Describe the history and geography of the Ancient Near East as it relates to the Old Testament;
- B. Narrate the history of the interpretation of the Old Testament;
- C. Understand and apply critical methods of Biblical interpretation;
- D. Describe and critique the major questions of OT scholarship and study (authorship, historicity, etc.);
- E. Narrate the essential elements of Israelite history and religion;
- F. Articulate the on-going authority of the Old Testament as canonical Scripture;
- G. Use the Old Testament more effectively in ministry.

#### **III. TEXTS**

William J. Dumbrell. *The Faith of Israel: A Theological Survey of the Old Testament*. 2<sup>nd</sup>. Ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002.

James Luther Mays, David L. Petersen, and Kent Harold Richards, eds. *Old Testament Interpretation: Past, Present, and Future*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1995.

Richard E. Friedman. *Who Wrote the Bible?* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997. **WWB**

H. Shanks, ed. *Ancient Israel: From Abraham to the Roman Destruction of the Temple*. Rev. ed. Biblical Archaeology Society and Prentice Hall, 1999. **AI**

James B. Pritchard, ed. *The HarperCollins Concise Atlas of the Bible* (HarperSanFrancisco, 1997). **ATLAS**

### **First Class Account**

It is imperative that you open a First Class Account at the Seminary. A folder for this class to which only you as members of OT520 have access is open for your use. A discussion/message board will be available for use throughout the term in order to facilitate greater dialogue between students and between you and me. Questions, comments, and hints are always welcome on this site. Additionally, all hand-outs, powerpoint slides, etc. will be available here.

## **III. EVALUATION**

### Grade Scale

A 100-93	B 86-83	C 76-73	D 66-63
A- 92-90	B- 82-80	C- 72-70	D- 62-60
B+ 89-87	C+ 79-77	D+ 69-67	F 59-0

\*\* "A" work at Asbury Theological Seminary is defined as "Exceptional work: outstanding or surpassing achievement of course objectives" (*Catalog*, p. 28). To achieve "A" level, students must demonstrate a critical engagement and synthetic understanding of the course materials.

**I take grading very seriously. It is my responsibility to evaluate your work and give you a letter grade. I hope to do this in the spirit of Ephesians 4:15-16 "But speaking the truth in love, we must grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by every ligament with which it is equipped, as each part is working properly, promotes the body's growth in building itself up in love."**

***I will be clear (to the best of my abilities) about my expectations for each assignment.***

- 1) Completion of all reading. (10%) Students will turn in a reading report (hard copy or email) describing the percentage of reading completed. **Due June 30<sup>th</sup> 11:59 PM (EST)**
- 2) Map Quiz. Students will be quizzed on their knowledge of the geography of the Ancient Near East, includes two parts: Countries and Bodies of Water; Key Cities in Syro-Palestine. 5% **Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup> 1:00 PM.**
- 2) Take Home Synthetic Essay. Each student on the basis of reflection upon class presentations and readings will sketch out his or her current approach to the Old Testament. The essay question will be handed out on the first day of class. Students are limited to ten double spaced pages. 30% **Due June 30<sup>th</sup> 11:59 PM (EST)**
- 3) Critical Book Review of Friedman's, *Who Wrote the Bible* (see required works above). The review is limited to 5 double-spaced pages. 20%

**Due June 13<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 PM (EST)**

4) Research Project. Each student will prepare a critical 8-10 page essay on a topic of her or his choice. The paper will be primarily exegetical (i.e., focuses around an issue crucial to the interpretation of a specific text). A minimum of five scholarly sources is required. The paper must use 1" margins on all sides, 12 size, Times New Roman font. (35%) **Due June 30<sup>th</sup> by 11:59 PM (EST)**

For all assignments, electronic submission is encouraged. For those using FirstClass, submit to brian russell. From other email servers, send to brian\_russell@asburyseminary.edu.

**IV. Reading Assignments – The three main textbooks for this class are *The Faith of Israel*, *Ancient Israel*, and *Old Testament Interpretation*. Please note the short reading assignment that is to be completed before our class begins on 6/2 (See top of syllabus).**

**As you complete the reading, use the following guides:**

**Two broad questions: 1) what significant learnings have I acquired through a careful reading of this book? 2) What questions do I have about the material (these questions may be confusing points made by the author or issues that you wished the author would have raised)?**

**In addition to these, reflect upon the following:**

**A. *The Faith of Israel*** – This is a standard introductory theological survey of the Old Testament written from an evangelical perspective. The majority of the text focuses on the content. Keep in mind the following issues as you read and take notes: What themes recur throughout the Old Testament? How do the different books fit together? What is the emphasis of each book?

**B. *Ancient Israel*** – This is an excellent survey of Israelite history from a moderately critical perspective. As you read each chapter, take note of the author's methodology and sources: What extra-biblical materials are available to reconstruct each historical period? What tensions exist between the biblical record and the extra-biblical sources? How does the author resolve the tension?

As you reflect upon these issues, keep the big question in mind: To what extent does the trustworthiness and authority of Scripture depend upon its complete accuracy in historical detail?

What lessons did you learn from the book? Questions?

**The above readings will supplement our classroom discussions and lectures. Keep the Atlas handy as you read and bring it to class for reference. If you don't know the geography of Israel well, make this a learning objective. It will be an additional means of enhancing interpretation and understanding of texts.**

**V. Attendance**

Class attendance is a necessity for successful completion of the course requirements. You may miss one morning or afternoon block without penalty. A loss of one grade level (A to A-) will result from absences in excess of this for each additional block missed. Exceptions to this policy must be discussed/approved before the week begins.

**VI. SCHEDULE (The following topics are tentative. Depending on time, more or less will be covered in lecture)**

**Each class day will begin with worship including praise, prayer, and the exposition of a key Old Testament Text. This part of the class does not stand in opposition to the “teaching part” of the class, but rather seeks to bridge the false dichotomy of head and heart. Serious study of Scripture leads to the worship of the living Triune God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.**

**The largest portion of the day will consist of lecture, discussion, and multi-media presentations on key topics in the study of the Old Testament.**

**The class day will end with an opportunity for research in the library so that you can begin to gain skills in research and access materials that will help you to prepare your final research paper.**

Course Introduction; Why study the Old Testament? The Need for Critical Interpretation?  
The Canon of the OT; Textual Criticism; Geography  
Worldview; Creation; Archaeology and the OT  
History of Ancient Near East  
Israelite History: Abraham to the Settlement  
Israelite History: Monarchy to the Maccabees  
Critical Introduction to the Pentateuch: Source Criticism, Form Criticism, Redaction Criticism,  
Canonical Approaches  
Covenant  
Evangelical Response to Pentateuchal Criticism;  
The Former Prophets: Jos – Kings  
Prophets and Prophecy in Israel: The Eighth Century and beyond  
The Poetry of Ancient Israel; Wisdom and the Sages  
Apocalyptic  
Issues in Old Testament Theology  
Women and the Feminine in Ancient Israel